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**ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ:
TIME FOR A CHANGE?**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Economic Sanctions Against Iraq: Time for a Change?

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 2 March 2001 PAGES: 31 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The United States has taken the lead over the last ten years to compel Saddam Hussein and Iraq to comply with the resolutions imposed by the United Nations Security Council on Iraq following the Gulf War in 1991. This paper examines these resolutions, the success of the effort to enforce them, and then focuses primarily on the issue of economic sanctions. The humanitarian issue of these sanctions is addressed and arguments are presented for keeping the sanctions in place and for modifying them. A short analysis of these arguments is followed by a recommendation on whether to continue economic sanctions against Iraq.

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ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ: TIME FOR A CHANGE?

"Ten years after the brutal and unprovoked Iraqi attack against Kuwait, the world is still faced with the threat of aggression from Iraq. And yet the United States and Great Britain seem to be alone in their efforts to contain Saddam Hussein. Over the past several years we have seen a weakening of the resolve with the international community to force Saddam Hussein to comply with the terms and conditions he accepted, and accepted in writing, at the conclusion of the Gulf War in '91."

"What is at stake here is the credibility of the United Nations and the enforcements of its mandates, and that of the Security Council. And yet two permanent members of the Security Council, Russia and France are now openly defying Security Council resolution by conducting flights into Baghdad without prior UN approval. How can this world – how can we hope to secure Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions when Iraq sees such behavior by permanent council members? Iraq senses weakness and divisions and is making the most of it with its continued defiance of the United Nations and the Security Council."¹

— Senator John Warner (R-VA)

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SITUATION

The Gulf War against Iraq ended on 1 March 1991 and the United Nations Security Council passed Security Council Resolution (SCR) 687 on 3 April 1991. Resolution 687 authorized the easing of sanctions against Iraq for the sale or supply of foodstuffs and of materials essential for civilian needs. This authorization was the basis for the Security Council passing numerous other resolutions to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq.² Table 1 is a listing of the relevant Security Council Resolutions. For the past ten years the United Nations, led primarily by the United States and the United Kingdom, imposed economic sanctions and used military force against Iraq to compel Saddam Hussein to comply with SCR 687.

The suffering of the Iraqi people under these restrictions – which Saddam Hussein could have ended years ago by accepting disarmament – is the crown jewel of Iraqi propaganda. It has aroused sympathy and support worldwide.³ Although the international coalition continues to apply the sanctions against Iraq, the consensus and cooperation of this coalition that defeated Saddam has largely dissipated. The Russians, the Chinese, and even the French are prepared to lift the oil embargo against Iraq.⁴ Many Arab, European, and Asian countries are also pressing hard to ease or eliminate sanctions.⁵

IRAQ Security Council Resolutions	
Resolution Number	Action
661	6 Aug 1990* Imposed comprehensive, mandatory sanctions Created sanctions committee Banned all trade Imposed oil embargo and arms embargo Suspended international flights Froze Iraqi government financial assets/prohibited financial transactions
678	29 November 1990 Authorized member states to liberate Kuwait Gave Iraq "pause of goodwill" to comply with UN demands
687	3 April 1991 Established terms of the cease fire Established set of eight specific conditions for the lifting of sanctions
706	15 August 1991 Authorized the oil-for-food program Permitted sale of up to \$1.6 million in Iraqi oil over 6-month period Directed that proceeds be deposited in UN escrow account to finance humanitarian imports, war reparations
712	19 Sep 1991 Established basic structure for the oil-for-food program implementation Iraq rejected resolutions 706 and 712
778	2 October 1992 Called on member-states to transfer Iraqi oil funds from pre-Gulf crisis to an UN escrow account
986	14 April 1995 Established a new formula for oil-for-food Permitted the sale of up to \$1 billion in Iraqi oil every 3 months Gave Baghdad primary responsibility for distribution of humanitarian goods Came into force December 1996
1111	4 June 1997 Extended the oil-for-food program Baghdad withheld distribution plans and oil sales
1153	20 February 1998 Further extended the oil-for-food program Raised oil sales to \$5.25 billion every six months Permitted revenues to finance urgent development needs (electricity sector)
1284	17 December 1999 Established new UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) Outlined procedures for the completion of weapons verification process Expanded humanitarian provision Declared Council's intention to suspend sanctions for renewable 120-day periods if Iraq cooperated with UNMOVIC and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
* Dates indicate time of Security Council decision. In some cases actual imposition may be later. List includes sanctions-related resolutions only.	

TABLE 1. IRAQ SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS⁶

Primarily based on humanitarian concerns for the Iraqi people, the international sanctions campaign has evolved into a propaganda war between the United States and Iraq over who is to blame for the heavy toll paid by Iraq's citizens. As the American and British governments try to hold the line on sanctions, many of the other Gulf War allies are joining the growing ranks of those who would rather trade with Iraq than punish it.⁷

In an attempt to lessen the impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi people, the UN, by passing SCRs 712, 986, 1111 and 1153, mounted the largest humanitarian relief operations in its history, the oil-for-food program. By 1999 this program had dispensed more than \$4.5 billion worth of food and medicines to the Iraqi people.⁸ However, despite this success the propaganda war continued and the coalition was still not in total agreement over sanctions. Several major attempts were made in 1999 to find a solution to the deadlock. France, Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Russia, and China made separate proposals to the UN Security Council to loosen the embargo in some manner in exchange for Iraqi approval of a weapon's monitoring system. All of these attempts were unacceptable for various reasons; either the Security Council could not agree on a formula to implement the proposal, or the proposal was unsatisfactory to either Iraq or the US.⁹

In December 1999 the Security Council attempted to break the stalemate when it approved a new weapons inspection system and offered to suspend all non-military sanctions if Baghdad allowed the return of weapons inspectors. SCR 1284 established a new UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to replace the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). UNSCOM was originally established by SCR 687 to inspect Iraq's chemical, biological, and long-range missile capabilities and to assist the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in ensuring Iraq did not acquire or develop nuclear weapons. SCR 1284 also defined procedures for the completion of the weapons verification process, eliminated the ceiling on the quantity of Iraqi oil exports for humanitarian purchases, eased some of the restrictions on medical and agricultural imports, and exempted Hajj pilgrimage flights. Sanctions would be suspended for renewable periods of 120 days if Iraq cooperated with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. If Iraq did not cooperate or was found importing military goods; the suspension would automatically cease.¹⁰

On the final vote for SCR 1284 only the US and Great Britain voted for the resolution, but since four members of the Security Council abstained, the resolution was adopted. Apparently this lack of cohesion by the Security Council emboldened Saddam because Iraq instantly rejected the resolution and repeated its previous refusal to allow the return of UN inspectors and demanded a complete lifting of sanctions.¹¹

The prospects now for consensus among the Security Council members and an end to the Iraqi standoff appear remote.

HUMANITARIAN ISSUE OF SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ

A major concern in this quandary of how, or even if, to continue to attempt to enforce SCR 687 is the issue of how these sanctions are affecting the Iraqi people. David Cortright and George Lopez, respected experts in the field of sanctions, claim:

"Although often intended to protect human rights, sanctions may contribute to the further deterioration of the human rights situation in a target nation. Those most likely to suffer from general trade sanctions are the vulnerable: women, children and those heavily dependent on the societal 'safety net' provided by international relief agencies. These concerns have led some to question whether the negative humanitarian consequences of sanctions sometimes outweigh their intended political benefits."¹²

The issue has split the sanctions critics over whether all sanctions should be lifted or just the economic ones. This issue is also forcing a deep reexamination about sanctions among critics. Peace activists have traditionally embraced them as an alternative to war, but now are connecting with the fact that sanctions themselves can be an act of violence – only slower.¹³ There are three different areas of contention regarding sanctions and their role in improving global justice: the authority of sanctions; the effectiveness of sanctions; and the morality of sanctions and their humanitarian impact on innocent, disempowered people within targeted states.¹⁴ This section will focus primarily on the morality of the sanctions since this is the area that has basically caused the most outpouring of anti-sanction debate around the world.

The humanitarian impact of sanctions presents the most contentious and difficult question concerning the justice of sanctions. The severe economic and social hardships that can result from sanctions have been a cause of intense controversy and debate. Secretary General Kofi Annan has written that economic sanctions are too often a blunt instrument and has called for measures to mitigate their adverse humanitarian impacts. Sanctions pose a dilemma for the UN dual mandate to preserve peace and protect human needs: "Humanitarian and human rights policy goals cannot easily be reconciled with those of a sanctions regime."¹⁵

However, exactly how much the sanctions have contributed to disease, malnutrition and death in Iraq is disputed. In the last decade, experts agree infant mortality and malnutrition rates have increased; electrical production and access to clean water have been significantly reduced. But there is no clear consensus on why or who is at fault.¹⁶ Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and others regularly claim that sanctions have killed

more than one million Iraqis, most of them children.¹⁷ Furthermore, Denis Haliday, former UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, believes the current sanctions policy is a breach of international law. "It's a complete breach of the Convention of the Rights of the Child." He also estimates that over one million Iraqi people have died as a result of the sanctions.¹⁸ One problem with many of the most frequently cited numbers is that they rely primarily on official Iraqi information sources.¹⁹ However, there is no question that the embargo, aggravated by Iraqi priorities that favor the elite over the poor, has been a disaster for most Iraqis.²⁰

In an attempt to better quantify the suffering, a commissioned public health specialist, Richard Garfield, of Columbia University, conducted an extremely comprehensive review of information from 22 field studies, including data from 36 nutritional assessments, along with demographic estimates from nine sources, three Iraqi government reports, ten UN-related reports and 18 press and research reports. The report focuses on deaths among children under five years of age, because the best data and the greatest change in mortality occur among young children.²¹ He admits that data is not available from any reliable studies on mortality since 1991, but nevertheless uses the data available and the very good data available from 1996-1998 on child nutrition, water quality, and other social and health indicators which influence child mortality to estimate a mortality rate for children under five years old²²

Sustained increases in young child mortality are extremely rare. In Iraq, there have been many reports suggesting a rise in death and disease caused by the Gulf War and the economic sanctions imposed after the war. There is no agreement however, on the magnitude of the mortality increase, or how to stop the resulting deaths from happening.²³ Garfield's review provides some attempted measure of objectivity to the issue. Garfield estimated that a rise in the mortality rate accounted for an estimated 100,000 to 227,000 deaths among young children from August 1991 through March 1998. About one-quarter of these were associated with the Gulf War; most were primarily associated with sanctions. The underlying causes of these excess deaths include contaminated water, lack of high quality foods, inadequate breast feeding, poor weaning practices, and inadequate supplies in the curative health care system. This was the product of both a lack of some essential goods, and inadequate or inefficient use of existing essential goods.²⁴

The estimates offered by Garfield of 106,000 to 227,000 deaths of Iraqi children under five years of age since the imposition of sanctions are significantly lower than the claims presented by the most vocal critics of sanctions in Iraq. But even the more conservative estimates confirm that hundreds of thousands of innocent children in Iraq have died prematurely and

unnecessarily during this sanctions crisis. At a minimum, children have suffered due to a lack of adequate nutrition and medical care. This is an appalling humanitarian tragedy.²⁵

Confusion over the number of deaths and rhetorical argument over which side is responsible for those deaths has prevented the international community from focusing more effectively on how to prevent their continued occurrence.²⁶ However, the UN has made some progress in alleviating this problem.

Since March 1998 the oil-for-food program has greatly increased access to essential supplies and the mortality rate has probably declined, but data is not yet available to estimate the magnitude of the decline. An additional concern is that the oil-for-food program established by the UN is not working as well as it could because of distribution problems and, perhaps, too many restrictions on humanitarian supplies by the UN monitoring team. A February 1999 UN report noted that approximately one-half of all medicines and medical supplies remained in warehouses and had not been distributed to local clinics and hospitals.²⁷ These problems have created a more difficult problem for the UN, Iraq, and the United States.

The humanitarian issue is a very complex one. While one can argue over the numbers affected or ultimately who's to blame, Garfield's study conclusively argues that the sanctions imposed on Iraq are having a profound effect on the Iraqi people, especially children. The policy of continuing economic sanctions against Iraq has therefore become questionable.

HAS IRAQ COMPLIED WITH SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 687?

If Iraq has complied with SCR 687, then economic sanctions may have served their purpose. The coalition has used economic sanctions, military action, and the United Nations weapons monitoring and inspection teams, in an attempt to force Iraq's compliance with SCR 687. A scorecard of the eight conditions specified in SCR 687 shows that Iraq has complied fully or in part with seven out of eight Security Council demands. This is reflected in Table 2.

Even though ten years of sanctions have not caused a noticeable change in Iraq's conduct or toppled Saddam, it is noteworthy that the coalition has persisted so long with the sanctions and accomplished so much. Until UNSCOM was ejected from Iraq, the UN inspections program prevented Iraq from rebuilding much of its capacity for weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Economic sanctions denied Iraq between \$100 and \$150 billion in oil revenue since the Gulf War; money that would have allowed Saddam to replace much of Iraq's destroyed military equipment.²⁸ Some critics of sanctions may argue these resources could have been used for adequate humanitarian aid also.

Scorecard of Iraqi Compliance with Security Council Resolution 687		
Conditions of Resolution 687	Compliance Status	Comments
Recognition of Kuwait territorial integrity and newly demarcated border	Yes	November 1994 recognition of Kuwait sovereignty and borders
Acceptance of demilitarized zone	Yes	Established soon after end of Gulf War
Ongoing monitoring and dismantlement of ballistic missile, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction	Partial	Acceptance of permanent monitoring in November 1993; much progress by UNSCOM on ballistic missiles and chemical weapons; unanswered questions remain on biological capabilities and other issues
Elimination of nuclear weapons capabilities	Yes	IAEA certifies that no nuclear weapons capabilities remain
Return of stolen property	Partial	Some state property returned; military equipment and private assets stolen
Acceptance of war damage liability	Partial	No formal admission of responsibility, but acceptance of Resolution 986 provides for compensation fund, which has paid war damages
Repatriation of missing persons	Partial	Many prisoners returned, but several hundred Kuwaitis remain missing
Renunciation of terrorism	No	No formal pledge, but no evidence of actual Iraqi support for international terrorist acts

TABLE 2. SCORECARD OF IRAQI COMPLIANCE WITH SCR RESOLUTION 687²⁹

Sanctions significantly contributed to the success of UN weapons inspections and the reduction of Iraq's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Although Baghdad frequently obstructed the inspection process, substantial advances have been achieved in eliminating Iraq's weapons programs. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright admitted as much in March 1997 when she called the progress recorded to that date stunning. In 1997 UNSCOM reported "there are no indications that any weapon-usable nuclear materials remaining in Iraq" and no "evidence in Iraq of prohibited materials, equipment or activities."³⁰ While concerns remain about gaps in the arms inspection information Baghdad has provided, most observers consider the Iraqi nuclear threat effectively neutralized. Iraq's ballistic missiles have been largely eliminated as well. Of the 819 Scud missiles known to exist at the start of the Gulf War, UNSCOM accounted for, and dismantled 817 missiles. Much of Iraq's chemical weapons capability has also been located and destroyed. However, much less progress has been made on eliminating Iraq's biological weapons capability,³¹ since the manufacturing of biological weapons is much easier to conduct and hide from inspectors.

Iraq has paid for its invasion of Kuwait, but one price has clearly been the inability to maintain and modernize its conventional arms imports. Since the Gulf War, Iraq has virtually had to drop out of the arms race in the Gulf region. It has had no major arms imports since the UN embargo in mid-1990. Its military expenditures have dropped to about one-tenth of their Iran-Iraq War level, as measured in constant dollars. Iraq has had no major arms imports since 1990. Iraq would have difficulty if it tried to recapitalize and modernize its forces for less than \$35 to \$50 billion.³²

There are others who disagree with this assessment. Scott Ritter, a former UNSCOM weapons inspector, views the United States' policy of sanctions as a failure. Ritter believes the cost to Iraq's people is too high. Ritter notes:

"The problem of Iraq is complex and vexing. Over the past eight years the Clinton administration was trapped in a Saddam-centric policy of regime removal, which dictated the containment of the Iraqi dictator through economic sanctions regardless of the reality of Iraq's disarmament obligation and the horrific humanitarian cost incurred by the people of Iraq. This policy has been an abject failure, a fact that has prompted much of the international community to start viewing Iraq and its leader more sympathetically."³³

The bottom line for the success or failure of the sanctions is, that despite more than ten years of comprehensive sanctions, the United Nations has been unable to complete its mission in Iraq. Through 2000, Iraq and the UN remained far apart on finding a solution to the crisis. Within the international community and among non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a palpable sense of "sanctions fatigue" has set in, generating a political backlash not only against the policy in Iraq but against sanctions in general.³⁴

Finding a solution to complete this mission is extremely difficult and will require a comprehensive policy involving weapons inspections, economic sanctions, the threat or use of military force, considerations of how to, or even whether to, insist on a change in regime, and the issue of containment of Iraq. Evaluating all the options to be included in this policy is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the arguments concerning the use of economic sanctions is a more central, critical issue facing the nation.

ARGUMENTS TO MODIFY OR ELIMINATE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A review of recent literature finds many who make compelling arguments for eliminating, or more often, modifying the economic sanctions against Iraq in exchange for allowing weapons inspections. Proponents of this argument cite humanitarian concerns and the critical world opinion, as well as claims that Iraq should receive incentives for its progress in complying with

SCR 687. Other arguments are based on the success of sanctions, the importance of having a weapon's monitoring team in Iraq, and the fact that modifying sanctions may help overthrow Saddam Hussein.

HUMANITARIAN REASONS

Many who support eliminating sanctions claim the United States continues to support crippling economic sanctions on Iraq, that have neither weakened Saddam's hold on power nor prevented him from pursuing his WMD programs. They have, however, reduced the Iraqi people to abject poverty. The claim is that Iraqi society, once relatively prosperous and solidly middle class, is now mired in a daily struggle for survival. Most people live a hand-to-mouth existence, relying on inadequate rations provided by the UN oil-for-food program. Iraqi's medical and educational systems, once the envy of the Arab world are in disarray. The social disintegration brought on by sanctions is not only a tragedy in its own right, but also diminishes the already slim chance that internal Iraqi discontent could be converted into sustained popular rebellion: people consumed with finding their next meal do not have time to overthrow dictators.³⁵

This economic toll also affects how Iraq views the countries carrying out these sanctions. As a result of sanctions, millions of young Iraqis have grown up amid economic and educational deprivation that the government has blamed on the US and the UN. The result is a significant segment of the population that is uninformed and alienated from the West.³⁶ This may result in adverse actions in the Gulf region and the world through increased terrorist activities.

As indicated previously, one cannot disagree with the fact that the sanctions have created an economic burden on the people of Iraq. But, as David Cortright and George Lopez point out:

"A policy designed to exert pressure on an aggressor's regime has been perverted by that regime into a virtual attack on innocents. It may be correct to say that responsibility for the humanitarian suffering rests with Saddam Hussein, but this does not solve the practical problem of overcoming injustice. The oil-for-food program may be a sincere attempt to address the injustice caused by sanction to Iraq, but it is not a sufficient answer and does not acquit the members of the Security Council of the obligation to take further steps to prevent the suffering of innocent civilians. Precisely because it is known that the Iraqi government is victimizing its own population, the UN must adjust its policies and find a different approach to achieving its objectives in Iraq."³⁷

INCREASE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND WORLD OPINION

Since current UN/US policy risks producing an entire generation of Iraqis who hate not just the government, but the American people,³⁸ there is a need to establish among all Iraqis the benevolent nature of the United States and those who cooperate with it and the United Nations. There is no better way to do this than proposing to lift the economic sanctions, which practically all Iraqis abhor. Even Ahmed Chalabi, the head of the Iraqi National Congress – the Iraqi opposition group favored by the Clinton administration's domestic critics – has argued that "any policy which punishes the Iraqi people is both short-sighted and immoral."³⁹

Some argue that lifting general economic sanctions in exchange for restoring disarmament operations – would recapture some international support for the US policy of keeping Iraq contained.⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, the countries that are pushing these options also have important business ties with Iraq. Turkey, Jordan, Russia, and France, all of which embrace the new approach, have robust trade and investment relationships with Iraq that predate the 1991 Gulf War. Turkey, for example, estimates it has lost about \$30 billion since that conflict in trade, transit business and remittances.⁴¹

The active participation of other countries is absolutely essential to enforcing any modified sanctions. To gain the cooperation of Russia and France, the US and Great Britain could propose a compromise within the Security Council by accepting an easing of the oil embargo and civilian trade sanctions, in exchange for a strengthened arms embargo. This would allow Russia and France to begin normal trading with Iraq but would prevent a renewed Iraq arms buying spree.⁴²

INCENTIVE FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

Sanctions are most effective when combined with incentives, as part of carrot-and-stick diplomacy designed to resolve conflict and bring about a negotiated solution. This strategy requires that the imposing authority establish clear and consistent standards for the lifting of sanctions. The Security Council has adapted an unyielding posture towards Iraq and refused to reciprocate Baghdad's occasional concessions.⁴³

While Iraq has not fully complied with UN resolutions, the UN's reluctance to partially reduce the sanctions provides little or no incentive for Iraq to comply. The Security Council could use the progress achieved in limiting nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles as a justification for partially lifting sanctions and as an incentive for greater Iraqi compliance.⁴⁴

There is a legitimate objective for upholding the authority of the UN and constraining Iraq's military potential. Cortright and Lopez believe this objective can be completed without punishing the innocent or threatening massive air attacks. A more enlightened and humane strategy would be to ease sanctions on civilian goods, especially oil industry technologies, and instead, focus on weapons and military-related technology through targeted sanctions. An easing of sanctions would open the door to unrestricted imports of food and medicine, as well as spare parts and manufactured goods necessary to rebuild Iraq's shattered economy and industrial infrastructure. While motivated by humanitarian concerns, the easing of civilian trade sanctions could also be offered as an incentive to encourage Iraqi cooperation and in recognition of the progress observed by weapons inspectors.⁴⁵

The argument for removing sanctions as an incentive is almost always linked to a compromise from Iraq. The UN and US should formulate a "take it or leave it" proposal for Iraq, involving a substantial revision of the sanctions in exchange for the return of intrusive, on-the-ground inspections designed to keep Iraq's WMD programs under observation and control.⁴⁶ If the major threat to American interests from Iraq is WMD development, then it is much better to have UNSCOM (or something like it) without sanctions than sanctions without UNSCOM.⁴⁷ If the US were to propose the deal outlined here (lift the sanctions in exchange for renewed inspections), Iraq can accept it or reject it. Either way the UN and the US both gain. This option, while not a complete solution at least holds out the promise of slightly improving the day-to-day life of average Iraqis while recreating serious obstacles to Iraq's development of WMD.⁴⁸

SANCTIONS HAVE WORKED

Arguments for modifying sanctions based on their results fall into two camps: those who claim the sanctions have not worked and never will, and those who claim they have worked well enough to warrant only modifying them. Much of the debate about the justness of sanctions hinges on an assessment of their effectiveness in achieving their stated purposes. A common view is that sanctions are an ineffective tool, intended to placate public demands for action but incapable of achieving real results. According to a major empirical study by the Institute for International Economics (IIE), sanctions have an overall success rate of 34 percent.⁴⁹

Sanctions made a significant contribution toward achieving the purposes for which they were imposed in one-third of the 116 cases examined. The IIE study concluded however, that sanctions by themselves are seldom able to achieve major objectives, such as rolling back aggression or forcing a change in the leadership of the regime.⁵⁰

Those who argue that Iraq is in a situation where sanctions have not succeeded have built a strong case. There is currently no monitoring or inspection of Iraq's capacity to develop or deliver weapons of mass destruction. The UNSCOM has effectively ceased to function; its inspectors have been withdrawn and its long-term monitoring systems abandoned.⁵¹ Iraq could have built more and better WMD since the inspectors left, thus defeating the purpose of enacting sanctions.

So regardless of the successes noted in Table 2, the question is not whether the sanctions impede Iraqi WMD plans, but rather to what extent. The evidence gathered by UNSCOM indicates that the answer is "not very much." A viable WMD program probably exists inside Iraq.⁵² Also, any progress made in degrading Iraq's unconventional weapons capabilities has come through UNSCOM, and not the sanctions.⁵³

The economic impact of the sanctions is also not a complete success by any measure. As reported by Naval Chief Petty Officer Robert S. Lanham in Proceedings, projecting the results of a recent 2-month period of intense maritime interdiction operations against merchant vessels transiting to and from Iraq, would yield a paltry \$24 million in confiscated or diverted Iraqi products. Compared with the nearly \$11 billion Saddam will take in annually with the oil-for-food program, interdiction operations hardly account for a drop in the proverbial oil drum.⁵⁴

HELP GET RID OF SADDAM

The refusal to modify or eliminate the sanctions suggests to some that the purpose of the continuing sanctions, at least for the US, is no longer to enforce Resolution 687. The political goalposts have been moved. The larger objective has become the political and military containment of the regime of Saddam Hussein. This is implicit in the many statements from US officials that the sanctions will not be lifted until Saddam is removed from power.⁵⁵

If Saddam's demise is the goal, then easing economic sanctions, especially along humanitarian lines would be the wisest approach to create the conditions necessary for a successful coup.⁵⁶ If the United States really wanted to make life difficult for Hussein, it would take one simple, if politically risky step: lift the sanctions on all but military items. This would restore morality to US policy and increase world support. More importantly, Iraqis would suddenly have only Hussein to blame for the country's decrepit hospitals, schools and infrastructure. He would claim victory in the short term, but would quickly find it difficult to deliver on all the promises of a better life once sanctions are lifted. Iraqis remember a much better, more prosperous life and will expect real improvements immediately.⁵⁷ If the

improvements don't materialize, perhaps the Iraqi people will finally find a way to overthrow Saddam.

Ofra Bengio, a Senior Research Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University, summarized the dilemma of getting rid of Saddam very well:

"The truth is that after a decade of containment, the United States and its allies still have no real vision for Iraq's future. If the US wishes merely to contain Saddam, it should devise ways to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people. Their misery only strengthens Saddam while feeding anti-Western resentment. If the United States truly does wish to engineer Saddam's fall, then it will have to act with patience, determination, and vigor, avoiding foolish pronouncements while making Iraq a sustained policy priority."⁵⁸

ARGUMENTS TO CONTINUE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

There are also many advocates who argue for continuing economic sanctions against Iraq. Their arguments include the assertions that: sanctions can work; humanitarian needs can be met even with the application of economic sanctions; Iraq has still not complied with SCR 687; and the belief that sanctions must remain in place to ensure Saddam is contained.

SANCTIONS CAN WORK

As mentioned previously, according to the IIE study, sanctions have an overall success rate of only 34 percent.⁵⁹ However, proponents of keeping the sanctions on Iraq would reason that since the UN is not relying on sanctions alone, it is possible for sanctions to force Saddam to comply with SCR 687. Further, as indicated in Table 2, progress has been made in this area through the effective use of sanctions and a weapons inspection process.

Proponents of this line of reasoning agree that the political results of the UN sanctions seem meager. Resolution 661 did not achieve its original objective of forcing Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and gave way in January 1991 to war. Nor have sanctions succeeded in forcing full compliance with Gulf War cease-fire Resolution 687, especially its disarmament mandate on WMD. However, as David Cortright and George Lopez point out:

"For many observers this is a dismal performance, suggesting sanctions do not work and in themselves violate human rights. Our perspective is different. We argue that in fact sanctions applied effective pressure against the Baghdad regime, leading to some Iraqi steps toward compliance and the partial fulfillment of many of the UN's objectives in Iraq."⁶⁰

Robert Lanham, agrees and advocates keeping sanctions since they, combined with US military forces, have successfully deterred Saddam's external aggression.⁶¹ This argument actually expands the purpose of the sanctions beyond exacting SCR 687 compliance from Saddam to one of containing Saddam and preventing him from threatening or attacking his neighbors. However, the US policy of containing Iraq is one accepted as appropriate by the world community and has been successful since 1991. The sustained application of economic sanctions has certainly been a contributing factor to this success.

HUMANITARIAN CONCERN CAN BE MET

Critics of the sanctions against Iraq have long complained about the hardships they inflict on ordinary citizens. They could hardly have argued their case more eloquently than did Colin Powell in his 1995 autobiography:

"The problem is that sanctions are most often imposed against regimes that have only their own interests and the retention of power at heart. And since these leaders are going to have a roof over their heads, food on their table, and power in their hands, sanctions rarely work against them. Saddam was the perfect example."⁶²

Curiously, Powell has had a change of heart since his appointment by President Bush as Secretary of State:

"We will work with our allies to re-energize the sanctions regime. And I will make the case in every opportunity I get that we're not doing this to hurt the Iraqi people, we're doing this to protect the peoples of the region, the children of the region who would be the targets of weapons of mass destruction if we didn't contain them and get rid of them."⁶³

Current US policy as delineated by Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, outlines the commitment the US has to enforcing the sanctions as humanely as possible:

"We are committed to maintaining U. N. Security Council Sanctions against the Iraqi regime, while lifting the burden of sanctions off the backs of the Iraqi people through expansion and streamlining of the oil-for-food program. Sanctions were never directed against the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people. In fact, food and medicine are specifically exempt from these sanctions. Iraq has always been free to buy and import these goods, but Saddam has long chosen not to do so in order to manipulate public opinion by deliberately causing the suffering of his own citizens. Our response has been to first establish and then expand the oil-for-food program."⁶⁴

However, Iraq bitterly denounces the terms of the oil-for-food-program, (which they call oil-for-the-UN program) that gives the UN full supervision over Iraq's spending.⁶⁵ Iraqi officials

complain that the sanctions committee too often places arbitrary holds on vitally needed humanitarian supplies and they resent the 25 percent surcharge that goes to pay war reparations. However, despite the difficulties in administering the program and Iraq's complaints about the surcharge, the program is at least a partial success.⁶⁶ "What's changing in Iraq is the steady lifting of the siege mentality, and the UN oil-for-food program that has restored a measure of stability for Iraq's 23 million people."⁶⁷

The Iraqi rejection of the UN's oil-for-food program and its obstruction of the humanitarian assistance program, once it got underway, is the most significant example of Iraq's disregard of the plight of its people. They rejected it because they saw it as a basis for the UN to maintain sanctions indefinitely. But, if Iraq had accepted the oil-for-food program when it was first offered in 1991 and complied with Resolution 986 immediately in 1995, rather than after a delay of nearly 2 years, then humanitarian relief would have arrived sooner.⁶⁸

Do sanctions kill babies, or do Saddam Hussein's own policies kill them? In the view of one highly respected expert on sanctions, George A. Lopez:

"The impact of the sanctions may be either immoral or moral, but judgement regarding their effect on innocent people must be assessed clearly by examining the response of the sanctioned country's leader and in light of the international relief effort mobilized on behalf of the innocent. In the case of Iraq, the moral ground continues to rest with sanctions."⁶⁹

IRAQ HAS STILL NOT COMPLIED WITH SCR 687

The US believes Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, remains dangerous, unreconstructed, and defiant. After more than eight years of effort to seek Saddam's compliance with UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, the Clinton administration concluded that Saddam would never be able to be rehabilitated or reintegrated into the community of nations. The administration is convinced Saddam's record makes it clear that he will never relinquish his WMD arsenal, and that he will never cease being a threat to the region, U.S. interests, and his own people.⁷⁰

Countries opposed to the US/British bombardment of Iraq, argued that the allied raids during Operation DESERT FOX in December 1998, did so much damage that Iraq was effectively disarmed and no longer needs to be subject to aggressive inspections or economic sanctions. Since Iraq's capacity to make WMD was destroyed, all that should be needed is monitoring and verification. United States and British officials disagree, saying Saddam could rebuild his weapons programs in months, especially if the sanctions were lifted, giving Iraq greater export revenue and therefore the means to rearm.⁷¹

Over the past 10 years, Hussein has managed to violate every element of the cease-fire agreement. He forced out one UN disarmament mission and rejected its replacement. His successful propaganda led to a compromise allowing Iraq to export oil to pay for humanitarian supplies. Today oil revenue is higher than the boom days before the Gulf War.⁷²

IF WE LIFT SANCTIONS HE WINS

Secretary of State Albright vigorously defended the sanctions saying that lifting them would give Iraqi President Saddam Hussein money to rebuild his weapons of mass destruction. She also said that the Iraqi peoples' plight should be blamed on Hussein, not the sanctions, because his regime was not allowing full distribution of food and supplies, approved for import under the UN sanctions program.⁷³ Hussein just uses the sanctions as an excuse to further retain his power.

Richard Butler, head of the UNSCOM from 1997 to 1999, in a statement to the Senate Armed Forces Committee, highlighted the fact that Iraq under Saddam has not changed. It is now 22 months since Tariq Aziz, speaking for Saddam told him on 3 August 1998 that Iraq was disarmed and would no longer cooperate with the commission. Since that time there has been no monitoring and Butler is sure Iraq is back in business in all WMD fields (nuclear, biological and chemical).⁷⁴

Others also see in Saddam the unrepentant dictator and believe lifting the sanctions would give him the means to pursue his obvious ambition: to dominate the Arabian Peninsula and all its oil.⁷⁵ Lifting sanctions would send a chilling signal to the region and the rest of the world that the US does not have the commitment to "stay the course."

ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENTS

The humanitarian issue of sanctions is a difficult one to assess. The plight of the Iraqi people, especially its children, is, and rightfully should be, of concern to those who impose sanctions. There is agreement (not on the extent of the suffering, but that sanctions have created undue hardship), among advocates from both sides of the argument. The issue is, whose fault is it? Saddam Hussein's reluctance to fully accept the oil-for-food program, and his diversion of these funds for other-than-humanitarian purposes, leads one to the conclusion the fault lies with him. He has it within his power to substantially relieve the suffering of his people.

The opinion of the world community, especially the members of the Gulf War coalition, is important. The US needs the cooperation of members of the coalition to ensure sanctions are

fully implemented. Eliminating sanctions may indeed improve the way the US is viewed by the world. However, the UN and US would be well served to better publicize the real reason behind the plight of the Iraqi people -- Saddam's determination to "beat" the sanctions, regardless of the effect it has on his people.

Proponents of sanctions argue that the sanctions are working and must remain in place until Iraq has completely complied with SCR 687. The robust success of UNSCOM prior to 1998 makes this a valid argument. The counter point that sanctions rarely work is certainly not a convincing rationale for not employing them in this situation. Precisely because they have proven to be at reasonably successful seems a valid motive for staying the course.

On the issue of how to best achieve the objective of finding a way to remove Saddam Hussein from power, it seems unlikely eliminating sanctions would have the desired effect. Eliminating this autocrat from power is probably not linked to sanctions in either case. Other policy initiatives must be explored if Saddam's removal is indeed a US or UN objective.

The contention that we should allow other-than-military trade in exchange for a weapons and monitoring system as an incentive or reward for Iraq's partial compliance with SCR 867 is a compelling argument. This seems to be an outstanding solution. However, the arguments from the status quo sanctions crowd take on a whole new look in light of Saddam's rejection of SCR 1284. This resolution fulfills all the requirements of those who advocate modifying the sanctions. By refusing to accept the Security Council's extremely reasonable propositions, Saddam proved his intransigence to ever comply with SCR 687 without continuing the sanctions. Reinstating a weapons inspection and monitoring system in Iraq should be an absolute priority for the UN. But the choice does not have to be either sanctions or monitoring. This "carrot and stick" approach has already been offered through SCR 687 and summarily rejected by Iraq. It would seem the only way to maintain sufficient pressure on Iraq to force them to allow the inspection teams to return is through the full enforcement of sanctions.

RECOMMENDATION

From a US policy perspective, permitting anything less than full compliance by Iraq with its current obligations under the UNSC resolutions would be an unacceptable outcome, signaling to other rogue states that they too can ignore the will of the international community and threaten neighboring countries.⁷⁶ The US should maintain sanctions.

On the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Gulf War, a defiant Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said Iraq had no regrets for its takeover of Kuwait. "When the criminals who attacked Iraq,

regret their crimes against Iraq, we will consider whether we made any mistakes. Iraq was the victim of conspiracy against its sovereignty and its national interests and Kuwait was part and parcel to that conspiracy so Kuwait deserves what it got in 1990." Also, Saddam's oldest son, Odai, a member of parliament, proposed that Kuwait should be included in the new map of Iraq.⁷⁷ Both of these comments reflect a regime that is not ready to join the world of reasonable and peaceful nations.

A quote from Robert Lanham's article summarizes extremely well why the recommendation should be to maintain sanctions:

"Are we really containing Saddam's regime? In the short term perhaps. But the truth of the matter is he has rebuilt a significant portion of his military. His control over every aspect of the Iraqi government appears to be complete. By remaining stubbornly resistant to the attacks, threats, and sanctions of the outside world, Saddam has created an aura of invincibility, gaining at least a measure of passive support among some leaders in the Arab community. Despite the wavering level of commitment to continuing sanctions, we must be firm in demanding Iraq's full compliance with all provisions of applicable resolutions before we ever consider lifting sanctions. No matter what their effectiveness, sanctions remain a valuable tool with which to prevent neighboring Arab countries from commiserating with Saddam. Our allies in the Arab community desperately need our example of steadfast dedication and commitment to keeping Saddam Hussein in check."⁷⁸

WORD COUNT = 7347

ENDNOTES

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² Kenneth I. Juster, "Iraq: An American Perspective," In Transatlantic Tensions, ed. Richard N. Haass, (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1999), 104.

³ Richard C. Hottelet, "Whither Iraq Sanctions? They're Forgotten but Not Gone – and Saddam is Winning," Boston Christian Science Monitor, 2 September 1998, p. 2.

⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁵ Robin Wright, "Bush May Find his Father's Foe a Formidable Adversary," Los Angeles Times, 17 January 2001, p. 1.

⁶ David Cortright and George A. Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000), 40-41.

⁷ Greg Myre, "Ten Years Later, Iraq Burdened but Unbroken; Middle East: To Americans watching on television, the Gulf War Looked so Easy. But Today the Clarity of War has Yielded to the Fog of Peace," The Los Angeles Times, 14 January 2001, sec. A, p. 2.

⁸ Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 37.

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¹¹ Ibid.

¹² David Cortright and George A. Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," Journal of International Affairs 52 (Spring 1999): 735.

¹³ Teresa, Watanbe, "Southland Muslims Seek to Ease US-led Embargo on Iraq" The Los Angeles Times, 25 December 2000, sec. B, p. 8.

¹⁴ Cortright and Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 735.

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¹⁶ Watanbe, 8.

¹⁷ Richard Garfield, "Morbidity and Mortality Among Iraqi Children From 1990 Through 1998: Assessing the Impact of the Gulf War and Economic Sanctions," March 1999; available from <<http://www.fourthfreedom.org/sanctions/garfield.html>>; Internet; accessed 4 February 2000, 7.

¹⁸ Denis Haliday, "The Progressive Interview: Denis Haliday," Interview by Matthew Rothschild, The Progressive 63 (February 1999): 27.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cameron W. Barr, "Ten Years Later, Iraq Suffers Proudly. Years of Sanctions Have Left Iraq's Economic Structure in a Shambles, but the Resolve of its People Seems Undented," Boston Christian Science Monitor, 30 January 2001, p. 1.

²¹ Garfield, 5.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

²⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁷ Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 49.

²⁸ Juster, "Iraq: An American Perspective," in Transatlantic Tensions, 114.

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³⁰ UNSCOM, Letter Dated 22 November 1997 From the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission [Richard Butler] Established by the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 9(b)(i) of Security Council Resolution 687 (1991) Addressed to the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/1997/922 (New York: United Nations, 24 November 1997) p. 3.

³¹ Cortright and Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 743.

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³³ Scott Ritter, "Commentary; We Must Break Out of the Failed Saddam Trap," The Los Angeles Times, 5 September 2000, p. 7.

³⁴ Cortright and Lopez. The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 57

³⁵ Gregory F. Gause, "Getting it Backward on Iraq" Foreign Affairs 78 (May/June 1999): 54.

³⁶ Barr, "Ten Years Later, Iraq Suffers Proudly. Years of Sanctions Have Left Iraq's Economic Structure in a Shambles, but the Resolve of its People Seems Undented," 2.

³⁷ Cortright and Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 742.

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⁴¹ Stephen J. Glan and Carla Anne Robbins, "Countries Turn Up Heat on Lifting Iraq Sanction – Washington Resists Easing," Wall Street Journal, 23 December 1998, sec. A, p. 10.

⁴² Cortright and Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 749.

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⁴⁴ Ibid., 743.

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⁴⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁸ Gause, 63.

⁴⁹ Cortright and Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 737.

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⁵⁴ Robert S. Lanham, "Let's Try a New Tack With Iraq," United States Naval Institute Proceedings 126 (September 2000): 48.

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⁵⁶ Bengio, Ofra. "How Does Saddam Hold On?" Foreign Affairs 79 (July/August 2000): 102.

⁵⁷ Stroebel and Whitelaw, 4.

⁵⁸ Bengio, 102.

⁵⁹ Cortright and Lopez, "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 737.

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⁶¹ Lanham, 48.

⁶² John Lancaster, "Powell's Change of Heart; Past Critic Now Sees Place for Iraq Sanctions," The Washington Post, 19 December 2000, sec. A, p. 26.

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⁶⁵ Myre, "Ten Years Later, Iraq Burdened but Unbroken; Middle East: To Americans watching on television, the Gulf War Looked so Easy. But Today the Clarity of War has Yielded to the Fog of Peace," 1.

⁶⁶ Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 50.

⁶⁷ Myre, "Ten Years Later, Iraq Burdened but Unbroken; Middle East: To Americans watching on television, the Gulf War Looked so Easy. But Today the Clarity of War has Yielded to the Fog of Peace," 8.

⁶⁸ Cortright and Lopez. "Are Sanctions Just? The Problematic Case of Iraq," 741.

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⁷⁵ Hottelet, 12.

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